

From labor,
General

RECENT CHANGES IN THE SEASONAL FARM
FORCE IN CALIFORNIA AND SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY

by James F. Rooney

Until June: 1636 Walnut.
Berkeley 9, Calif.

Permanent: East 428 Augusta
Spokane, Wash.

INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the farm labor situation in San Joaquin County, it is necessary to consider not only the economic changes taking place within the limits of this County, but to look beyond to the changes taking place within the State and in the Nation. The broader perspective is necessary to supplement the local data because the extreme mobility of agricultural workers permits easy migration in response to changing economic forces. Hence, large-scale unemployment or depressed wages in one area can easily prompt migration to other areas, thus effecting the labor supply and the wage scale in neighboring regions.

California maintains the largest crop production of any state in the nation and cultivates the greatest number of farm products resulting in the most complex seasonal and geographic crop patterns and labor needs. The Golden State produces 100% of the Nation's supply of almonds, dried figs, lemons and olives, and more than 90% of the apricots, grapes, plums, dried prunes and English walnuts consumed in the United States. Over half of the domestic supply of avocados, peaches, asparagus, spinach, tomatoes and lettuce is grown in California. (1) In order to cultivate and to harvest this agricultural abundance, a year-around average of 470,000 farm workers toil California crops; over one-third of this average work force is composed of hired seasonal workers. (2)

During the past forty years, mechanization of farm cultivation and harvesting has proceeded at a rapid pace, and as a result, in recent years agriculture in the United States has employed successively less manpower. The average number of hired farm workers in the United States has declined from 3,381,000 in 1910 to 1,851,000 in 1956—a decline of 46%.⁽³⁾ This decrease in hired workers is nearly matched by the 41% decline in farm families during this same period despite large population gains and corresponding increases in food production.⁽⁴⁾

California is unusual in employing more people in agriculture today than ever before. This has been due principally to increased production. The combined production of principal crops has increased steadily throughout the past decade. The total tonnage of the combined production of principal crops for the years 1942-46 was an average of 21 million tons per year; in 1955 the total tonnage increased to over 28 million tons of crops produced—an increase of one-third in a decade.⁽⁵⁾ The continual increase in tonnage produced is due to greater use of fertilizers, closer supervision of planting, cultivation and thinning and bringing water to formerly arid land which increased the total acreage planted. "The outlook is for continuing expansion of the agricultural industry in California."⁽⁶⁾

But California agriculture has never been adjusted to accommodate a stable labor force. It has never been necessary. Ever since the start of large-scale cultivation of field crops at the time of the completion of the railroad in the 1860's, a large fluid labor supply has been available. At the time of development of the present land use pattern shortly after the middle of the 19th century, the mobile labor pool was composed of Chinese newly unemployed after the completion of the transcontinental railroad. This group of supplementary laborers could be called upon whenever needed, and no obligations were considered to be existent after the completion of a harvest. After the disappearance of the Chinese from the farms, they were followed in agriculture by the Japanese, Portuguese, East Indians, Filipinos, American fruit tramps, displaced dust bowl farmers, Mexican wetbacks, and presently by Mexican Nationals.

But the various nationality and social groups did not remain long in seasonal agricultural work. Of its own merits, migratory farm work has never attracted and held a stable labor force for a long period of time. Because of the rigors of continuous travel, uncertain earnings and seasonal unemployment, each successive social group has left migratory farm labor within a generation. After 15 or 20 years, members of each foreign group have earned sufficient money and learned enough of American folkways to qualify for steady commercial employment. The departure of one social group from the agricultural economy in California has prompted the recruitment and importation of another.

Since its origin, the migratory farm force in California has been composed of workers unable to qualify for more profitable employment elsewhere in the economy. This has been due either to a lack of knowledge of American social institutions on the part of foreigners or to a lack of ability or desire to adjust to the demands of steady employment in industry on the part of United States citizens. Members of this latter group are either vagabonds or alcoholics, and they follow seasonal crop work because it is one of the few employments in the economy open to short-term workers. Since long-term commitments are not required for seasonal labor, it has persistently attracted some unstable workers who could not adjust elsewhere in the economy. These people have been a regular part of the seasonal farm labor force along with the various nationality groups.

Thus, since its inception, the seasonal farm labor force has been composed of three groups:

- 1) Depressed social groups.
- 2) Reliable traveling workers who don't wish to take steady employment in industry.
- 3) Alcoholics and others who are unable to meet the requirements of industry.

The alcoholics are recruited from the resident population of industrial and commercial workers and from the migratory workers.

The continual availability of a mobile seasonal labor force and the wide variations of soil type and climate were conducive to the development of extreme crop specialization in various areas. Due to the nature of the local soil type and climate, certain fruits and vegetables were found to grow much better than others. The high potential profit from the sale of the specialty crops forced the price of land to rise commensurate with the expected earnings. The high investment in turn forced farmers to grow the most profitable crop. This left small farmers no alternative other than more intense specialization in the few crops which returned maximum profits. And since most of the regional specialty agricultural products are highly seasonal, farmers in one locality cannot grow a variety of crops which mature at successive seasons in order to keep steady crews of men regularly employed.(7) Thus migrant labor, and its accompanying social problems, is an inherent part of the organization of California agriculture. The presence of a mobile group of seasonal farm laborers was a necessary condition permitting the development of present-day crop specialization by area; crop specialization, in turn, contributes to the continued existence of seasonal migratory labor.

The recent increases in California crop production have brought increases in employment of both year-round and seasonal farm workers. The labor market has been strongly effected because of production increases in many crops having great hand labor requirements, such as apricots, cherries, peaches, strawberries, and tomatoes. This shift to the production of small fruits requiring more hand labor is largely a result of bringing irrigation to formerly arid lands and to the ready availability of seasonal labor to harvest the increased production. For the State as a whole, the employment of seasonal workers in peak harvest season rose from 221,000 in 1950 (8) to 275,000 in 1955.(9) More recently, increased production of small crops caused a one-year overall increase of 5% in the farm labor demand in 1955.(10)

San Joaquin County, likewise, has experienced a tremendous increase in farm production since 1940. In sixteen years, over 100,000 acres of pasture land and 125,000 acres of stubble have been converted to crop producing land. In addition, the acreage of grain hay has decreased from 33,800 acres in 1940 to 14,400 in 1956 (11); much of this former grain hay land has been planted in orchards and vegetables. This conversion has caused a tremendous spurt in the production of fruits—farm products requiring more hand labor. Since 1940, apricot tonnage has increased 600% and cherry production is up 300% in San Joaquin County. The biggest gains were registered in peach and tomato production with an increase of 900% since 1940.(12) The latter two crops are both harvested in the late summer and have greatly increased the demand for seasonal labor during this peak season. This has led to a huge increase in the employment of temporary workers in San Joaquin County. Records of the Stockton office of the State of California Department of Employment show that the number of seasonal workers employed during the

early fall season of maximum employment has increased from 21,000 to 32,000 from 1948 to 1956---a 50% increase in less than a decade.

This increasing demand for more and more seasonal laborers can be met either by attracting more migrants or by importing foreign labor. The latter alternative was chosen because of the availability of large numbers of Mexicans who could be depended upon as reliable workers at present wage rates. The Agricultural Act authorizing contract Mexicans was passed by Congress in 1951.(13) Since that time, each year has seen an increase of Mexican workers imported into the United States and into California. These have comprised a continually increasing percentage of the total hired labor force. Nationally, the number of contract Mexicans has more than doubled from 1951 to 1956. The number contracted for the nation in 1951 was 191,000; this increased to 445,000 in 1956.(14)

The increase of contract Mexicans in California has been much greater than the national average. During the peak of the harvest season in 1951, contract Mexicans numbered 7,800 and comprised 3.5% of the seasonal farm labor force.(15) By 1955 their numbers had increased nearly tenfold to 74,000, comprising exactly 27% of the temporary labor force during the autumn harvest season.(16) However, these figures should be viewed cautiously. They do not accurately reflect the actual change in the number of Mexican workers in California. They record the increase of legal workers. Prior to "Operation Wetback" in 1954, a large part of the seasonal labor force was composed of illegal Mexican workers. Since 1954 the illegal workers have been replaced by more workers with legal contracts sanctioned by an international agreement. This has placed the Mexicans in the position of being an organized group of legitimate workers forming an official part of the American farm economy.

The Federal law authorizing Mexican workers states that foreign workers will be used only when insufficient native Americans are available at similar wages.

"No worker recruited under this title shall be available for employment in any area unless the Secretary of Labor has determined and certified that . . . (3) reasonable efforts have been made to attract domestic workers for such employment at wages and standard hours of work comparable to those offered to foreign workers." (17)

Hence Federal legislation has set foreign labor as the standard against which native farm workers must adjust in order to gain a livelihood.

Statistics from the State of California, Department of Employment reveal that in 1956 foreign workers comprised 50% of the total hired farm labor force at the peak of the fall harvest season in San Joaquin County. Of the total of 37,200 hired farm workers, Mexican Nationals numbered 18,586 during the week of September 29, 1956. Because the Mexican workers comprise a large segment of the hired labor force, their wage affects the prevailing wage paid all workers in the agricultural economy. That this is generally true wherever large groups of foreign laborers are used is recognized in the Annual Report of the California Farm Placement Service: "And in the last analysis, the wage paid the Mexican National becomes the same wage paid the domestic worker on the same job under the same condition."(18)

Before the harvest begins, the farm associations and the farmers meet and decide the prevailing wage, realizing that if sufficient native workers are not attracted at this wage, Nationals can be made available. The prevailing farm wage in San Joaquin County is 85¢ an hour. At this initial wage, it is quite frequent that insufficient laborers are attracted; therefore a "labor shortage" legally can be said to exist—at that price. The expectation of a pending labor shortage

is sufficient sanction for the Department of Employment to request additional foreign labor.(19)

Factual data indicate the effect of imported Mexicans upon farm wages. In 1945, California received 63% of the contract Mexicans and raised cotton wages 136% over the 1940 wage. Texas got no contract Mexicans and raised cotton wages 236% over their 1940 prevailing wage. During this same period, the United States average wage had increased 215% over that of 1940.(20) The same process occurred inversely in the same areas after the end of the war. In 1949, California got 8% of the contract Mexicans and raised cotton wages 15%; Texas got 46% of the imported Mexicans and lowered cotton wages 11%.(21) During this time there was little change in the nation-wide average of farm wages.

That Mexican Nationals are in many cases used to supplant, and not to supplement local labor, is evidenced by the fact that they are used during seasons when great numbers of native workers are unemployed. The period of least agricultural activity occurs in February and March of the year. According to the Department of Employment there were 471 Mexican Nationals employed in San Joaquin County the first week of March 1957, while at the same time 2,000 native agricultural workers were unemployed. Over half of these are single men living on skid row. At this period, seasonal farm work offers 300 to 350 jobs per day—less than the number of foreign workers employed in the County.

"It is our conclusion that the evidence demonstrates that the agencies of Government responsible for importing and contracting foreign labor have not been successful in protecting domestic farm labor from detrimental effects of imported contract alien labor. We find alien labor has depressed farm wages and, therefore, has been detrimental to domestic labor."(22)

Further evidence of the effect of foreign workers on the domestic labor force is shown by the exodus of illegal Mexican workers during "Operation Wetback" in 1954. At that time, 1,022,267 illegal Mexicans were apprehended in the Western States by the U.S. Border Patrol after repeated broadcast warning to leave the country.(23) In California 248,000 illegal Mexicans were deported from January through May 1954.(24) Immediately following, between June 17 and July 8, the number of claimants of unemployment insurance benefits declined 15%. The 1953 decline for the same period was 4%.(25) The anti-wetback campaign continued throughout the summer and 83,000 more men were deported from California from June through September. Immediately following the removal of the 83,000 men, unemployment insurance payments dropped about \$325,000 per week for several months.(26)

A marked contrast in recruitment of seasonal farm workers is provided by the State of Oregon which experiences its peak demand for seasonal labor in early June. Mexican Nationals comprise four-tenths of one percent of the total seasonal labor force at this time.(27) And the common hourly wage during the summer months range from \$1 to \$1.50 per hour.(28) As stated, in San Joaquin County Mexicans comprise over 50% of the total seasonal labor force at peak season and the prevailing wage is 85¢ an hour. There is much less of a seasonal labor shortage in Oregon because the wages are high enough to attract students for harvest work during the summer months, thus utilizing more of the local labor force. The Oregon State Employment Service makes a definite effort to utilize students as well as all available local labor before calling for supplementary foreign workers.(29) Contract Mexicans are used in larger numbers to supplement the local labor force only in September when students return to school. At this time, the foreign workers increase to 9% of the total number of seasonal workers.

Throughout this century, generally there has been an increasing inequity between farm and factory wages. The years 1910-1914 are the base period for determining parity prices of farm products. During this period the ratio of farm to factory wages was 66%. During the depression farm wages dropped to 25% of factory wages in 1950.(30) In 1957, the national average factory hourly wage was \$2.05 (31), while the U.S. average wage for all types of hired farm workers was 95¢ an hour.(32) Migrants tend to have less gross earnings because of intermittent employment. In California during April 1957, the average factory wage was \$2.31 an hour(33), while hourly wages for temporary farm work in San Joaquin County varied from 85¢ to \$1 an hour during the same period, and in the Imperial Valley the most common hourly farm wage paid at this time was 70¢ an hour.(34) Thus the inequity between farm and factory wages still is about as great as it has been in recent years. Farm workers have no guaranteed minimum wages; they are not covered by Federal Minimum Wage legislation.(35) But ever since the end of World War II farmers have been complaining of a general seasonal shortage of workers, for which reason foreign workers have been imported.

"Normally, if there were a labor shortage, wages should rise. Since, on the contrary they have declined, it seems reasonable to infer that the supply of illegal alien labor, plus the contract labor the Government has admitted or imported, has helped to depress farm wages relative to factory wages."(36)

In addition to being forced to adjust to the low wages of alien workers, seasonal farm workers face other difficulties which further limit their income. Considering the nation as a whole, there has been a continually narrowing economic base for farm workers due to increased mechanization in recent years. This has caused the number of farm family workers to decrease by 41% since 1910 and the average number of hired farm workers to decrease by 46% despite large population gains and corresponding increases in food production during this period.(37)

Mechanization forces farm workers into industry, but it also shortens the working season for the remaining workers. In 1930, nearly one-half of the hired farm workers could get employment 12 months of the year; in 1949 less than 20% could get a full year of work. The West Coast has been more extreme than the nation as a whole; in 1931 the Pacific Coast utilized 52% of the total farm working force for the full year, while in 1949 only 16% were needed year-round.(38) The continual narrowing of the economic base forces many agricultural workers to become migrants if they wish to remain in agriculture.

Due to the cultivation of more hard crops, the seasonal variation in San Joaquin County has been still more extreme. The number of year-round farm workers has changed little in the past ten years, while increased production has involved more people in harvesting operations. This has caused the percentage of year-round workers in the County to decrease from 15.1% in 1948 to 11.9% in 1956.(39)

"The development of highly mechanized and commercial agriculture has created an oversupply of labor in many areas. Mechanization of pre-harvest work in particular has changed the hired labor picture. More and more hired labor is used only for work at peak. This means that hired farm workers must depend on short-time seasonal jobs supplemented by other farm or nonfarm work."(40)

In a nation-wide survey the Bureau of Agricultural Economics found that 71% of the migratory farm laborers worked less than a total of 150 days at both farm and nonfarm jobs in the year 1952.(41) Although earning an average of \$7.60 per

working day, the total annual income for migratory male workers during 1952 was approximately \$1,100.(42)

The work pattern of non-migratory seasonal farm laborers is substantially the same. A survey of non-migratory seasonal farm workers in the South and Southwest demonstrated that male household heads averaged 21 weeks of farm work, 16 weeks of nonfarm work and were unemployed for 15 weeks of the year.(43) Despite the fact that many agricultural workers are subject to a great deal of seasonal unemployment, they are specifically exempted from unemployment insurance benefits.(44)

The trend toward lower real wages and the heightened seasonality and uncertainty of employment disgusts many of the professional migratory workers and more of them leave agriculture and join the ranks of industry in which employment was more certain and wages an average of three times higher. Nationally the number of agricultural migrants has declined 37,000 from 1951 to 1956. They formerly comprised 25.7% of the nation's seasonal farm labor force and today are 19.5% of this labor force.(45)

The exodus of the professional fruit workers has also caused a decrease in the production per worker per day. "If there were a composite measure of productivity per worker employed, such productivity would show a decline between 1950 and 1955."(46)

Because there are fewer capable workers, it takes more men to get the job done. Agricultural placements in the State of California rose 39% in one year, 1954-55, due partially to increased production but due mostly to the hiring of more marginal workers who failed to stay on the job.(47)

These factors result in less production per worker. A labor shortage develops because insufficient capable workers are attracted at the prevailing wage. These constitute justifiable circumstances for declaring a "shortage" and importing more alien labor at the same prevailing wage. Thus more contract Mexican workers have been imported. In one year, their numbers in California increased by more than 40% from 1954 to 1955 (48), and have increased tenfold from 1950 to 1955.(49)

As their numbers grow, they become a significant factor in stabilizing the wage scale at the present rate. Future rises in the cost of living and subsequent rises in the industrial wage scale undoubtedly will draw more of the remaining reliable farm workers out of agricultural employment causing further labor shortages and necessitating importation of more foreign labor at the present prevailing wage scales. The "prevailing wage" for farm labor in San Joaquin County is 85¢ an hour.

There has been only a slight decline in the number of migrants in California. From 1950 to 1955 their numbers decreased 7,000 from 79,000 to 72,000 (50) despite a tremendous increase in the total production and subsequent demand for more seasonal labor.(51)

The failure of agriculture to attract and to hold reliable skilled workers is indicated by the fact that year-round farm jobs in California have been more plentiful than qualified applicants, and turnover has been high.(52) One reason that native workers have failed to fill the permanent farm jobs is because of the attraction of non-farm jobs. In 1955 new jobs opened up in construction, manufacturing and service industries, in which farm workers could quite easily qualify.(53) Construction offers the opportunity to continue in migratory work for those who prefer it and it offers the high wages, more regular employment and the fringe

benefits of industry.

The continuing failure of agriculture to meet the competition of industry has resulted in a greater shortage of farm workers. The reliable and experienced farm hands are leaving seasonal work for better paying jobs in year-round farm work and especially for non-agricultural occupations. Other remaining migratory workers are not coming to California but move northward to the Pacific Northwest where wages are often 50% higher. In July 1957, the most frequent hourly wage in California varied from 70¢ to \$1 an hour.(54) In Oregon and Washington at the end of July the most common hourly wage was \$1 to \$1.50 per hour.(55)

Recent reports from local employment offices state that fewer inter-state migrants have appeared in the Imperial Valley, Sonoma, Mendocino, Napa, Kings and San Joaquin Valleys. Nearly all these areas report fewer family groups and more single men.(56) The single men for the most part are older, and/or are newcomers to agriculture. There are fewer professional fruit tramps and more "winos".

As stated previously, for several decades the farm labor force has included skid row inhabitants who are unable to hold steady employment in industry. As the professional agricultural workers leave California's fields, the domestic farm force comes to be composed more and more of unreliable workers who are forced to remain in agriculture because they are unable to hold steady employment in industry. For the most part, these people are alcoholics or are aged and partially infirm men. Day labor in agriculture is the only employment whose requirements they can meet. Due to the combination of a low wage rate and deteriorated physical condition, earnings are small, so that these men cannot afford to live anywhere except on skid row. Any area inhabited by a group of these men automatically becomes a skid row.

As has been pointed out, the professional fruit tramps are leaving agriculture. At the present wage scale, it is difficult for a farmer to hire a reliable crew to harvest his crops and then to depend upon them to carry out the job. Since fewer reliable workers can be attracted at prevailing wages, procuring and transporting day laborers has become a major effort to modern small fruit farming. It has become more convenient for the farmer to contract with a middle-man who can be depended upon to procure sufficient laborers each day. There may be a 50% turnover of men from day to day, but as long as sufficient numbers are brought to the fields, the crops can be harvested. This frees the farmer from the responsibility of finding and transporting his workers and of supervising their labor in the fields.

The contractor signs an agreement with the farmer to furnish laborers and to receive in return a set price per unit harvested. From the price the contractor receives from the farmer, he pays his hired workers a lesser amount per unit harvested, and counts the difference as his own profit. Thus contractors constitute still another factor in further limiting the wages received by seasonal farm workers, in addition to initial low pay and intermittent unemployment.

As stated, the contractor pays the worker out of the amount received from the farmer. But there is no limit to the commission the contractor can take. There are no provisions for, or limitations of a contractor's fee in the Labor Code of the State of California.(57) Commissions taken by contractors are not based on any consideration of a living wage for the workers, but are purely a function of supply and demand. Contractors in San Joaquin County have taken one-third and more of the price paid by the farmer for harvesting crops. Contractors took from 25% to 33% of the wages paid by the farmers for picking apricots; 22% of the tomato wage; and at least 38% to 40% of the peach wage in 1957.(58) This operates to give seasonal workers still lower wages and adds to their poverty

and disgust with the farm economy. It also acts as a further incentive for reliable workers to leave agriculture.

Contractors generally haul their crews back and forth from town each day. The need for more temporary workers is reflected partially in this increase of the Day Haul out of the cities. The fact that men are transported to and from town daily means that fewer agriculture workers live on the farms. They must live in the city. The day haul is composed mostly of temporary workers---day laborers. The combination of low wages and the nature of the workers causes them to live in the skid row section of the city.

The day haul in California increased 54% from 1954 to 1955 when the State had a year-round average of 3,400 men per day; the City of Stockton has the largest year-round average, with 900 workers per day.(59) Thus Stockton has over 25% of the day haul workers for the entire State. This is a major reason for the concentration of a large group of reliable workers in the Stockton West End. Seasonal employment draws unstable workers; at the same time, the discouragement of intermittent work and low wages tends to make some willing workers more and more unreliable.

However, the Stockton day haul has actually decreased nearly 50% in seven years. Reaching a maximum of 4,000 men daily during the 1950 spring cherry harvest, the day haul has declined steadily each year to reach 2,100 men during the peak of cherry season in 1957.(60) But this decrease has been reflected in the exodus of the reliable worker---not of the unreliable worker.

The concentration of more unstable and alcoholic workers in the Stockton skid row in recent years is indicated in the increase of arrests for drunkenness since the advent of contract Mexicans. In 1950 there were no contract Mexicans in San Joaquin County. There was a total of 21,200 temporary workers at peak season,(61) and 6,278 drunk arrests occurred in the City of Stockton in that year.(62) In 1956 at peak season, Mexican Nationals numbered 18,586; native temporary workers had declined one-third to 14,500 (63), while drunk arrests climbed two and one-half times to 15,176.(64) Stockton Chief of Police Jack A. O'Keefe states that Mexican Nationals account for an insignificant number of arrests. This means that a smaller percentage of native farm workers are accounting for the increasing number of drunk arrests. Of course, the West End does not contain all the drunks arrested in the City; but skid row did account for 86.5% of the total in 1956.(65) This percentage amounts to 13,127 skid row drunks---more than double the 1950 total of drunk arrests for the entire city.

There is the possibility that the increase in drunk arrests is due in great part to more rigorous law enforcement and more lenient sentences from the courts. Stockton Municipal Court Judge William Dozier states that there has not been any general policy of sentencing or suspending the sentences of drunks. Hence, there is no particular policy change from year to year. Chief of Police O'Keefe states that there has been no change in the official policy of arresting inebriates, and adds that he would like to see more arrested if space was available to accommodate them. Thus the number of American temporary workers is one-third less than seven years ago, while the number of drunks arrested is two and one-half times greater. And the number of Mexican Nationals has increased from nothing to outnumber the native seasonal farm labor force.

This situation is a problem to be faced by local, state and Federal levels. Although the U.S. Immigration and Nationalization Service supervises the actual importation of workers, the initial requests for foreign laborers originate from

the farmers themselves. The certificates of shortage are issued and approved by the local State Employment Service in each county. The Chief of Farm Placement is presumed to have an accurate knowledge of actual farm conditions and labor needs.

Requests are forwarded to the headquarters of the State Employment Service where the requests of individual counties are consolidated and sent to the U.S. Employment Service of the Department of Labor. The higher echelons of government approve these requests as a matter of policy.

The use of alien labor within the United States is basically a question of public policy concerning the economic organization of the Nation's agriculture.

"The issue we face as a matter of national policy is this: Shall we continue indefinitely to have low work standards and conditions of employment in agriculture, thus depending on the underprivileged and the unfortunate at home and abroad to supply and replenish our seasonal and migratory work force?

"We have long waived and compromised on the issue of migratory labor in agriculture. We have failed to adopt policies designed to insure an adequate supply of such labor at decent standards of employment. Actually, we have done worse than that . . . We have used the institutions of government to procure alien labor willing to work under obsolete and backward conditions and thus to perpetuate those very conditions." (66)

If the choice is to continue the latter course of action, Stockton can expect a smaller but more intense skid row with an increasing percentage of alcoholics and an increase in the number of drunk arrests.

SUMMARY

California agriculture has never been organized so as to accommodate a completely stable working force. Since the end of World War II, there has been no large depressed social group in California. Labor demands as a result of recent increases in seasonal crops with great hand-labor requirements have been met by importing large numbers of contract Mexican workers. These workers constitute an official part of the farm economy and standardize the wage scale at the rate paid the imported aliens. This is sanctioned by Federal Legislation. The prevailing low wage forces reliable agricultural workers to seek employment in industry, resulting in further labor shortages and the importing of more Mexican Nationals at the established wage rate. The continuing inflation in the American economy results in an ever increasing inequity between farm and industrial wages, causing more workers to leave agriculture.

This causes the native farm force to be composed to a continually greater extent of those workers incapable of qualifying for industrial employment. Thus the domestic farm force is composed to an increasing percentage of alcoholics and vagabonds. The greater difficulty in hiring reliable men prompts many farmers to use labor contractors to hire and to manage work crews. These contractors take a percentage of the workers' earnings and transport men daily from skid row. Due to a great number of seasonal crops and the concentration of more unreliable workers in seasonal farm work, Stockton has the largest day haul in the State of California with a year-round average of 900 men per day. Hence, Stockton is producing one of the largest and most severe skid rows on the West Coast if not in the nation. This is confirmed by the tremendous increase in drunk arrests.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Minimum Wage Law be extended to agricultural workers in order to insure a fair wage.
2. Bring agricultural workers under the unemployment compensation benefits offered workers in all other industries. Thus farm workers can have a means of subsistence during the slack season of the winter months.
3. Revoke the State law authorizing labor contractors; thus farmers will have to do their own hiring directly. This will permit the working men to receive the full pay for their labor.
4. More closely survey the need for contract Mexicans and use alien labor only to supplement the native work force, not to displace it.

These will enable migratory workers to earn a decent living if they wish to work regularly.

5. Construct an adequate park and recreation center in the City of Stockton so that men can be afforded the opportunity of associating outside an alcoholic atmosphere. At the present time, the only recreation offered is found in barrooms, pool halls, standing on the street and reading in the library.

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44. Compilation of the Social Security Laws, Section 210, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1955.
45. Labor Market and Employment Security, November 1951, p. 42; Ibid, November 1956, p. 26.
46. California Annual Farm Labor Report - 1955, p. 22.
47. Ibid, p. 24.
48. Ibid, p. 12.
49. Ibid, 1951, p. 37; Ibid, 1955, p. 14.
50. Ibid, 1951, p. 37; Ibid, 1955, p. 14.
51. Ibid, 1955, p. 12.
52. Ibid, 1955, p. 20.
53. Ibid, 1955, p. 17.
54. State of California, Department of Employment, California Weekly Farm Labor Report, 881-A #609, July 27, 1957.
55. Oregon State Employment Service, Oregon Farm Labor Information, July 26, 1957; Washington State Employment Service, Farm Labor News, August 2, 1957.
56. California Annual Farm Labor Report 1951, p.p. 52-55.
57. Labor Code Annotated of the State of California, Division 2, Part 6, Chapter 3, "Farm Labor Contractors".
58. Apricots—contractors received \$18 to \$20 per ton from the farmers, states Mrs. Fred Goetjen of Tracy, former Chairman of Apricot Committee of the California Farm Bureau. The California State Employment Service reports that workers were paid an average of 30¢ per 45 lb. box, or \$13.50 per ton as of July 3, 1957.

Peaches—Farmers paid contractors \$10 to \$12 per ton, reports the Cling Peach Advisory Board of Modesto. As of September 1, 1957, harvesters were paid 12¢ to 15¢ per 40 lb. box or \$6 to \$7.50 per ton, reports the California State Employment Service.

Tomatoes—Farmers pay contractors a flat rate of 3¢ per box picked by the workers, states a tomato farmer residing in Stockton. The California State Employment Service reports that pickers received 11¢ to 12¢ per 50 lb. box as of September 1, 1957.
59. California Annual Farm Labor Report - 1955, p. 28.
60. State of California, Department of Employment, Stockton Office.
61. Ibid

62. Stockton Police Department, Annual Report to the F.B.I., 1950.
63. State of California, Department of Employment, Stockton Office.
64. Stockton Police Department, Annual Report to the F.B.I., 1956.
65. Stockton Police Department Weekly and Monthly Report, July through December 1956.
66. Migratory Labor in American Agriculture, p. 22.

Asparagus - April 26, 1957

Picker \$1 for 30 pound box, average earnings from \$10 to \$15 per day

Contractors not used in asparagus

Farmer pays	\$.35	for packaging wage
	.60	for wooden crate
	<u>1.00</u>	picker's wage

\$1.95

Farmer receives \$2.50 to \$3.25 per 30 pound crate, profit ranges from 55¢ to \$1.30 per crate.

Broker takes 50¢ per crate

Wholesaler - \$3.50 per crate

Retail - 15¢ per pound or \$4.50 per crate

(Source: Asparagus Growers Association)

Farmers may sell asparagus directly to the freezer or cannery in 100 pound units as the season nears the end.

Picker \$3.25 per 100 lbs of white asparagus
 \$3.75 per 100 lbs of green asparagus
 Average earnings range from \$10 to \$15 per day

Farmer \$7 per 100 lbs for white asparagus at freezer on April 26
 \$8 per 100 lbs for white asparagus at freezer and cannery on June 5
 \$9 per 100 lbs for green asparagus at freezer and cannery on June 5

Farmer's profit ranges from \$4.75 to \$5.25 per ctw.

Apricots

The majority of the apricot crop was sold to canneries. Prices as of July 3, 1957:

Picker 30¢ per 45 lb box (Farm Labor Office) - This is \$13.50 per ton. Average earnings range from \$4 to \$6 per day, \$10 is tops

Contractor \$18 to \$20 per ton (Mrs. Fred Goetjen of Tracy)

Farmer \$80 to \$100 per ton at the cannery (Mrs. Goetjen)

Cherries

As of May 10, 1957, the beginning of the season, most of the cherries were shipped East.

FARMERS COST AND PROFIT

Picker paid 5½¢ a lb or \$1 per 16 lb box, earns average of \$10 to \$12 per day, \$25 is tops (Farm Labor Office) \$1.00

Packing per box	1.00
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Handling per box	.20
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Total cost to farmer	\$2.20
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Cherries - continued

Total cost to farmer	\$2.20
Farmers' profit	<u>1.40</u>
Sale price to broker	\$3.60

BROKERS' COST AND PROFIT

Broker receives per 16 lb box, New York wholesale price (Federal State Market News Service)		\$5.50
Pays to farmer per box	\$3.60	
Wooden crate (Cherry Growers Association)	.39	
Freight to New York (Southern Pacific Freight Depot)	<u>.44</u>	
Cost to broker	\$4.43	<u>4.43</u>
Brokers profit		<u>\$1.07</u>

June 5th and 11th:

Picker - $4\frac{1}{2}\phi$ to 5¢ per pound

Farmer - 12¢ per pound at cannery
16¢ per pound if sold on open market as higher grade produce

Wholesale - 18¢ per pound

Retail - 25¢ to 29¢ per pound in Stockton

Tomatoes - September 1, 1957

Picker - 11¢ and 12¢ per 50 lb box; (Farm Labor Office)
This is an average of \$4.60 per ton
Average picker makes 60 boxes; best pickers make 90 to 100 boxes

Contractor - Takes 3¢ per box commission - this is \$1.20 per ton

Farmer - Receives \$20 to \$22.50 per ton at the cannery (Agricultural Commissioner)

Wholesale - \$1 per 20-23 lb lug (Boralli Produce Company)
This is an average of \$90 per ton

Retail - 10¢ per pound

Strawberries

Farmer receives per crate	\$1.75
Picker	\$.50
averages \$2 a day, \$4 tops (Farm Labor Office)	
Crate and small boxes	.30
Field supervision and hauling	.20
Broker @ 10%	.17 <u>1.17</u>
Farmers profit	<u><u>\$.58</u></u>

Wholesale \$1.75 - because brokers sell directly to local stores.

(Source: Brookside Produce Company)

Onions - June 5

Picker	12¢ for 50 pound sack, average earnings \$2-\$4 a day, \$6 tops (Farm Labor Office)
Contractor	30¢ per 50 pound sack. Must also pay for sacking and grading (Levy & Zentner)
Farmer	\$2 per 50 pound sack
Broker	Pays farmer 60¢ for harvesting, sacking and loading, pays \$2.60 per 50 pound sack, sells it for \$3, profit 40¢ per 50 pound sack. (W. E. McGillvray)
Wholesale	\$3 per 50 pound sack
Retail	\$5 per 50 pound sack @ 10¢ per pound

As the season progressed, the wholesale price dropped. The brokers who had contracted for the onions at a set price lost money.

Onions - July 3

Picker	10¢-12¢ per 50 pound sack
Contractor	30¢ per sack
Farmer	\$2 per sack
Wholesale	\$2.50 per sack (Cooney Produce Company)
Brokers	lost an average of 10¢ per sack
Retail	\$5 per sack @ 10¢ per pound

The further decline of the wholesale price to \$2.25 to \$2.50 during the week of July 10 caused further losses on the part of the onion brokers. (Agricultural Comm.)

Peaches - September 1, 1957

Picker - 12¢ to 15¢ per 40 lb box; this is \$6 to \$7.50 per ton (Farm Labor Office)
Average picker earns \$6 per day; better pickers earn \$10-\$12 per day; in exceptional fruit, the better pickers earn up to \$20 per day.

Contractor - \$10 to \$12 per ton (Cling Peach Advisory Board, Modesto)

Farmer - \$62.50 per ton at cannery (Agricultural Commissioner)

Wholesale - \$1 for 16 lb crate (Boralli Produce Company)
This is at the rate of \$125 per ton.

Retail - 10¢ to 15¢ per pound

Stockton City Manager reaction:

"How do you move shed row
out of town?"

Pearce

Room 122

El Rancho

